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RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 000280

SIPDIS

STATE FOR INR (RAYMOND LESTER), G/AIAG (CAROLINE MEIRS, CHARLES PATTERSON), EAP/MLS (DOUG SONNEK), EAP/PD (JDAVIES, LHIGH)

STATE PASS TO HHS/OGHA (EELVANDER, DBELL AND ABHAT)

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [KPAO](#) [KSCA](#) [EAGR](#) [AID](#) [AMGT](#) [VM](#)

SUBJECT: VIETNAM'S NOMINATION FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ACTIVITIES TO ADDRESS THREAT OF AVIAN AND HUMAN PANDEMIC

REF: STATE 05323

11. (SBU) Summary: Mission Vietnam submits this activity proposal for consideration under the Avian Influenza Action Group's (AIAG) program to promote public diplomacy and communicate U.S. foreign policy objectives (reftel). The proposal, "Capacity Strengthening for Public Health Journalism to Combat Avian Influenza in Vietnam," is designed to help significantly enhance the competence of senior Vietnamese media personnel in understanding and conveying to mass audiences important messages regarding Avian Influenza. At the same time, the program will train key personnel in the elements of investigative journalism, supporting broader themes of good governance and accountability. The intended goal is to foster the provision of accurate, actionable information to literally tens of millions in a country already hard hit by the disease. End Summary.

12. (U) The GVN has been praised by the international donor community for taking strong action in combating AI since the first poultry outbreaks in 2003. Despite suffering a total of 93 human cases and 42 deaths, Vietnam is now considered a "model" in the region due in large part to nationwide poultry vaccination campaigns and persistent efforts of all state agencies to mobilize against the common enemy of H5N1. The battle in Vietnam is not won, however, and the urgent need exists to educate Vietnam's 84 million people on issues ranging from government accountability with regard to health risks to age-old backyard poultry practices. Post is confident that the proposed public diplomacy activities described below will not only increase understanding of avian and human influenza in the media and beyond, but will enhance a growing sense of cooperation and partnership between our two countries. Equally important is the lasting expertise in public health reporting these Vietnamese journalists and editors will develop and share, and the appreciation they will gain of the importance of detecting early signs of a pandemic before it becomes widespread.

13. (SBU) Journalists in Vietnam have an important role to play, as they begin to take on investigative reporting roles that challenge the current governance norms at all levels. However, there is no real tradition of investigative journalism in Vietnam, and training for most members of the media does not include the expertise building or specialization that one finds in the United States and other nations with free media. Mission Vietnam's project, as proposed, seeks to help train a cadre of health and science journalists to build public awareness at grassroots levels via mass media outlets, namely newspaper and television. The activity will be managed by PAS staff, with significant input and assistance from the ESTH's and HHS Health Attache's offices. It will complement

ongoing efforts by USG implementing partners, including Abt Associates and CARE International, who are members of the PAHI's information, education and communications (IEC) network, whose activities include social marketing, and public announcement broadcasting systems as well as posters and billboards.

¶4. (U) The global goal is an informed and educated media that understands their role in informing the public, and engages them by galvanizing public opinion and actions to support preparedness, surveillance and detection, and response and containment efforts. The activity objective is to develop the capacity of newspaper and TV journalists and editors on the subject of avian and human pandemic influenza, thereby enabling the state media in Vietnam to more fully prepare for and respond to this looming threat. As proposed, the \$50,000 activity would include a targeted study exchange to the United States for senior writers and editors of health and science journalism, followed by journalism workshops held in Hanoi and in Ho Chi Minh City or Can Tho in southern Vietnam. Post anticipates that other workshop sponsors, including UNICEF, will provide matching funds of approximately US\$10,000.

¶5. (U) Proposed activities include a targeted study exchange to the United States for three Vietnamese editors of major news outlets and one Vietnamese avian influenza expert, who would be hosted by two professors of a U.S. school of journalism with expertise on public health reporting. The American hosts (journalism professors) will then travel to Vietnam to conduct training workshops in northern and southern Vietnam for approximately 25 Vietnamese journalists. The training workshops will include basic information on AI from public health and veterinary perspectives, lessons learned from the study tour to the U.S., and targeted journalism training with a focus on health and science journalism. Post anticipates that other donors, including UNICEF, may co-sponsor one or more of these training workshops. The PAHI's IEC Network sponsored national AI

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communications workshops in Hanoi on November 29, 2005 and March 3, 2006.

¶6. (U) Mission Management strongly supports this important public diplomacy proposal as it directly supports the Mission's Performance Plan and advances the GVN's Partnership on Avian and Human Pandemic in Vietnam. The full proposal, with cost breakdowns, will be sent by email to the AIAG Coordinator Caroline Meirs as requested in reftel.

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